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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Strafing the Church

HAVING survived the assaults of the atheistic philosophers of the eighteenth century, and of the agnostic scientists of the nineteenth, Christianity is now being subjected to a barrage fire from Socialism and other forces of Uplift and Unrest. These are supported in their attack by people who think that in some way the church should have prevented the war, and that the task of policing, or at least of pacifying, the Universe is among the duties of that institution.

In an article entitled "The New Religion," appearing in this issue of THE LORUS, the Countess of Warwick charges the church with delinquency in failing to abolish slums, for taking no steps to abate the evils of drink, disease, and poverty; and finally that it has failed miserably in connection with the war. In the first two instances Lady Warwick is voicing the views of the Socialists and repeating much of what Bernard Shaw has told us in "Widowers' Houses"; and so far as the war is concerned there has been a more or less general feeling to the effect that its occurrence marks the break-down of Christianity. The article is significant as expressing the opinion of many thoughtful and progressive men and women, and of a host of others who are stunned by the apparent apathy and helplessness of the church in this crisis in the world's history.

It is not necessary, however, to accept as valid the doctrines of the church, nor indeed of dogmatic religion of any kind, to perceive how illogical and unreasonable are these indictments. The whole

argument is based on an unwarranted assumption, an assumption which is traversed by the facts both of history and of contemporaneous life. Moreover, the remedial measures proposed in "The New Religion" are not only vague in conception but proceed from that utter lack of understanding of human nature which marks nearly all socialistic bushwhackers.

Before the church or any other institution can be charged with failure, its purposes must first be ascertained, and any inadequacy in affairs outside of its programme must be deemed irrelevant. What then did the Christian church set out to do? And what were the circumstances of its origin? The church primarily set out to save souls, and not bodies. It did not concern itself with well-being in this world but with salvation in the next. The whole of the teachings of the early church and of revealed religion breathe of spiritual elevation and a disregard of material things. Poverty, wretchedness and woe were to be as naught in view of the rich reward beyond.

The meek, the poor, the humble—the slum dwellers, as it were—are exalted as compared to the rich and highly placed—the wearers of purple and fine linen. Christianity was originally accepted by the Roman slaves—people whose lot was hopeless and unspeakably wretched—and the doctrines of the church were designed to give them comfort. In baptism the world as well as the devil is renounced. The most searching criticism of Christianity, and which is based on admitted facts, is made by Nietzsche, who contends that Christian morality is a slave moral-

ity, and therefore unfitted for freemen. The church's message was primarily to the poor and oppressed; these were its natural converts and believers. Why then should Christianity be expected to abolish its own clientele, so to speak? Thus the significance of the utterances concerning the difficulty of the rich in reaching heaven—they were deemed to be too comfortable to be intrigued by promises of future happiness. Having the cash they could well afford to let the credit go. On the other hand the wretched and oppressed were offered consolation in lieu of reform. They were told to disregard pain, but there was no hint that pain would cease—the poor ye have always with you. In short, Christianity was neither a remedy nor a prophylactic; it was an analgesic, a narcotic.

The early converts did not complain of the failure of the church to ameliorate their conditions, and gladly accepted, in lieu of present welfare, the promise of after-death compensation. It is surely absurd for sympathisers with the slum dwellers of to-day to discredit an institution for failing to perform a duty which it never undertook and which its early adherents never expected it to undertake. You go to the church and complain of overcrowded tenements, it replies quite pertinently in the words of Jesus: In my Father's house are many mansions. In cases of defective sanitation it is a plumber and not a parson that should be called in, and Lady Warwick should see an architect rather than an archbishop in regard to the erection of model houses for the poor. The functions of a doctor and a divine are likewise divergent.

As to the war, if the church has not undertaken to mend the temporal lives of individual men, how much less should it be looked to for interference in national, or even cosmic, calamities. The protagon-

ists of "The New Religion," like Mr. Bernard Shaw and other socialistic philosophers, are curiously out of sympathy with humanity. Social service never can fire the imagination of mankind, and uplift will never be a symbol for which men will fight and die. With all of its faults the church has shown a profound insight into the heart of man, and has endeavored to supply that need in his nature which cannot be supplied by philanthropic formulas. It is the need, apparently, of something to satisfy the mystical element in the composition of common men. The intellectuals may not feel this need, or may satisfy it in other ways. Man does not live by bread alone. Furthermore, the church, in spite of its superstitions and childish traditions, has displayed great shrewdness in making its covenants, and its most rabid antagonist cannot affirm successfully that it has not redeemed its promises. For as no man has returned from the next world to ascertain if his life-insurance policy has been paid in this, so no mortal man has penetrated the Great Beyond and checked up the payment of Christianity's obligation to insure its followers eternal bliss.

A Close Season for Men

THE recent acquittal of a lady charged with the killing of her ex-husband in particularly sensational circumstances, together with intimations of immorality on the part of the deceased, has provided the pundits of the press with an excellent opportunity to expound the obvious in pontifical phrases; and, naturally enough, it has recalled other killings of men "by and for women"—the most frequently cited being the Nan Patterson and Thaw cases.

There has been no attempt, however, to suggest a remedy for these periodical expressions of disesteem on the part of women toward men, and very little fear-

less analysis of the psychology of the verdicts.

In France a beautiful woman is regarded as an æsthetic asset, and consequently is held immune from punishment for passional crimes. In England, where the legal maxim is "men first," justice grinds impartially and is no respecter of persons of the fair sex. It is different in America. Exactly contrary to the general opinion, it may be stated that we acquit ladies for the removal of the errant male, not because the lady is lovely but because the man is wicked. As Puritans we distrust and persecute Beauty, but still more do we abhor Sin—Sin being synonymous with extra-marital sexual relations.

It would seem, however, hardly fair even to the most prodigious philanderer, that he should be hunted at all times and that, at least, he does not enjoy the privileges of game-birds. For a certain period of each year a close season should be declared when man may be assured of life, liberty and non-pursuit by indignant women armed with pistols, shot-guns, hat-pins, corrosive acids, nagging tongues and other destructive and corrective implements. Now that women may vote in New York State, they might find it expedient to initiate legislation with a view to the conservation of men—wild or tame, pure or peccant.

A Delicate Matter

THE activities of women in connection with the war, whether inspired by patriotism, vanity, restlessness, or an insatiable thirst for novelty, are all equally to be welcomed provided the results are

alike satisfactory. There appears to be, however, a disposition on the part of many of our young ladies to seek work in connection with the Red Cross and other relief agencies in France. Those who adopt this course from a sincere motive to aid their country, and not merely as camouflage to escape the monotony of daily life at home, will be interested to learn that the Government intends to transport to this country those of our wounded who may be removed without injury. Moreover, and in any event, the emigration of amateur nurses and other inexperienced workers for the welfare of soldiers is to be discouraged.

But there is another phase of the matter which is somewhat delicate, if not sinister in suggestion. It is stated that the French Government intends to adopt intensive methods for propagation of the human species to replace the war waste of men. Rumors have been circulated of similar intentions on the part of Germany, and that the latter proposes to encourage polygamy, to remove the ban on illegitimacy, and to rear the progeny where the parents are unable or unwilling to assume the burden.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that remedial measures of some sort are imperative in France, where even before the war the population was declining. It is now a question of national self-preservation, and although our sweet friend France, the darling of the nations, is nothing if not chivalrous, nevertheless, if the reports are true, the position of our attractive young spinsters on French soil might become somewhat embarrassing.